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# Dorm Kitchens— Backstage

by *Elsie Nielsen*

*Technical Journalism Junior*

IN THE WEEK preceding the meal served you at an ISC dormitory, there has been much planning, purchasing and preparing to make it attractive and nutritious.

Miss Elsie A. Guthrie, dietitian for Women's Dormitory Food Service, does most of the "backstage" work. "Menus are spot-checked for nutrients every week," she says, "and they are always found to be above the minimum requirements in everything." Miss Guthrie adds that the same menu is used in each dormitory.

One of the dishes coeds appreciate most, both for its fresh appearance and palatability, is individual salads served with dinner. These salads are made before each dinner—a large order when one considers that there are 1,000 girls to be served. Approximately 1,000 of these attractive fresh fruit salads are prepared each afternoon.

A typical Sunday dinner menu in the women's dormitories might include:

	Grapefruit Juice Cocktail	
	Fried Chicken	
Mashed Potatoes		Gravy
Peas		Carrots
	Ambrosia Salad	
	Rolls and Butter	
	Chocolate Sundae Pie	
Milk		Coffee

Mrs. Mary Rash, head cook in Birch Hall, estimates that it takes the kitchen staff five hours to prepare this menu, from the baking of the graham cracker pie crusts Saturday night to the pouring of the grapefruit juice cocktail just before serving.

The market list for this Sunday dinner includes such quantities as 175 frying chickens, four bushels of potatoes, 50 pounds of carrots, 38 No. 10 cans of peas, 40 gallons of grapefruit juice and 25 pounds of butter. Before breakfast on Sunday morning, the kitchen staff begins to brown the chickens on a huge grill and to prepare and bake the 170 dozen rolls which will be served with the meal.

Everything is done to keep the cooks' work to a minimum. Students are employed as "kitchen men" to do such tasks as peeling vegetables and washing dishes. Each cook has her own specific duty and is aided by such time and labor-saving equipment as an electric mixer with a capacity of 84 egg whites, a huge food chopper, a three-compartment steam cooker and a large grill for browning meats and baking pancakes.

In spite of their efficiency, errors are sometimes made by the kitchen staff, says Mrs. Rash. She recalls

a time when she had prepared cookie dough one evening and placed it in the refrigerator in large bowls for overnight storage. Honey butter was also stored in the refrigerator. Somehow the two foods were mixed up the next morning, and cookie dough appeared on the dining room tables in place of the honey butter. "The funniest thing about it is that neither the girls nor the housemothers seemed to realize the mistake, and they used the dough as a spread on their muffins," she said.

Meals are planned, not only for healthfulness and attractiveness, but also to take advantage of fruits and vegetables in season. During the summer these commodities are purchased from local farmers. When fruits and vegetables are not in season in the Middle West, they are ordered directly from Des Moines.

## *Student Staff*

Miss Guthrie says that for as long as she can remember, students have been employed by the Women's Dormitory Food Service in such capacities as waiters, hostesses, set-up girls and kitchen men. Approximately 130 students are presently working for the food service.

A head waiter and a hostess have charge of each of the six dining rooms. They work with Miss Guthrie and with the housemothers in each dormitory to maintain efficient and courteous service. Waiters are instructed as to correct table service and proper serving techniques. So efficient is their procedure that a meal for 200 girls is completed in as short a time as one-half hour.

Miss Guthrie feels that dining should be as pleasant as possible for the girls, and fresh flowers on the tables year-round help to achieve this goal. At special occasions such as Christmas, Easter, Halloween and Valentine's Day, the girls are surprised with candle-light service and special table decorations.

Linen tablecloths and napkins add to the crisp appearance of dormitory dining rooms. The weekly laundry list for these items runs into large numbers since both cloths and napkins are changed twice each week. Two hundred fifty tablecloths and 2,000 napkins are laundered each week, says Miss Guthrie.

Cooperation among kitchen staff, student employees and dietitian is the key to the efficiency of the Women's Dormitory Food Service and is what distinguishes it among collegiate food services throughout the Middle West.